



# COMMUNICATING CONFIDENCE

Barb Visser, May 12, 2020  
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Women's Leadership Network

# CONTEXT FOR THIS CONVERSATION

- To succeed and lead, confidence is as important as competence.
- Highly competent people often cannot see their own brilliance (women more than men).
- Lack of self-confidence holds us back.
- Confidence is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

# ONGOING: CROWDSOURCED RESOURCES

**What are your recommendations?** *Share in the chat window throughout our conversation.*

- Books
- Articles
- Apps
- Quotes
- Podcasts
- TedX speeches
- Social Media accounts to follow

# BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

## Introduce yourself

- **One True Word** - start with a strength, skill, value, or quality that is absolutely true about you
- Whitworth graduation year (if applicable)
- Current or desired job role

# THE CONFIDENCE GAP

Evidence shows that women are less self-assured than men—and that to succeed, confidence matters as much as competence.

In studies, men overestimate their abilities and performance, and women underestimate both. Their performances do not differ in quality.

In study after study, the data confirm what we instinctively know. Underqualified and underprepared men don't think twice about leaning in. Overqualified and overprepared, too many women still hold back. Women feel confident only when they are perfect. Or practically perfect.

~ Katty Kay *and* Claire Shipman,  
The Atlantic, May 2014  
The Confidence Gap

# GROUP DISCUSSION: WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE?

*Share in the chat window.*

- Thoughts on the article highlights. Agree or disagree?
- Where and how does lack of self-confidence show up for you? What's the impact?

# WHAT MIGHT LOW CONFIDENCE LOOK LIKE?

- Downplay strengths; diminish skills and experience (if it's easy for me, it's easy for everyone)
- Harsh or negative self-talk, loud inner critics, frequent comparison to others
- Extreme thinking; thought distortions (always/never, all/nothing, perfectionism)
- Fixed mindset; Internal attribution (I'm bad at math) rather than external attribution (I need more practice)
- Imposter mentality ("I was lucky" or "right place, right time" or "it's an accident I'm in this role")
- Assign personal blame ("my fault") rather than seeing external obstacles
- Idolized modesty; choose to stay hidden/unseen/backstage (don't "hog the stage" or "steal the limelight")
- Opt to be "likeable" if we think confidence will receive a harsh response (don't be "too assertive")
- Wait to take risks until we are over-qualified

# WHAT'S THE COST OF SELF-DOUBT?

- Inaction, hesitation, holding back, playing small
- Indecision, analysis paralysis
- Missed opportunities or “too small” goals because we avoid risk
- Stay in place longer; choose the familiar even if we know we need to move on
- Give up, drop out, or not try at all
- Diminished visibility, slower promotion or career growth
- May choose or stay in a less competitive field, even if our passion is in a different area
- Regret, disappointment, deferred dreams



# BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Confidence is a belief in one's ability to succeed, a belief that stimulates action. In turn, taking action bolsters one's belief in one's ability to succeed. Confidence accumulates—through hard work, through success, and even through failure."

To become more confident, women need to stop thinking so much and just *act*.

~ Katty Kay *and* Claire Shipman,  
The Atlantic, May 2014  
The Confidence Gap

# GROUP DISCUSSION: WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE?

*Share in the chat window.*

- How have you built confidence?

Gradually, incrementally, step by step over time?

In an instant, with a single win/action, through a radical transformation?

# WAYS TO BUILD CONFIDENCE

- **Self-Awareness:** strengths, values, purpose, passion, preferences, goals, dreams (self, coach, mentor)
- **Insights from Others:** performance reviews, conversations, personality profiles – claim 3rd party endorsements!
- **Own your Expertise:** don't downplay or assume everyone knows what you know
- **Gain Mastery and Build Skills** (in almost anything!): practice something that fully absorbs your focus
- **Celebrate Success and Everyday Wins:** tune into what you do RIGHT; translates competence into confidence
- **Soften your Self-Talk:** show compassion for your present/future/past self; turn down the volume on inner critics
- **Growth Mindset:** try new things, take risks, allow failure, add “yet” to any “I can't” statements
- **Set Goals and Track Progress:** specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound
- **Create Structures that Remind You:** positive affirmations, power playlists, visuals cues, collage/dream boards
- **Wholehearted Gratitude:** scan for the beautiful, be appreciative and present in the moment

# EXERCISE: COMMUNICATING CONFIDENCE

## **The WOW Factor: Listing your Top 10 Achievements\***

- List the 10 things you're most proud of, WOW-able moments in career, family, education, etc.
- Reflect on these previous achievements to identify and communicate what you are good at.
- Use this evidence to increase your self-confidence and your ability to communicate it.
- This is your GRIT and CONFIDENCE speaking. It's true! It's not bragging. Even the "team effort" stuff.

\*Adapted from Mindtools.com, Frank Macri, Michelle Mazur, and David Letterman

# BREAKOUT CONVERSATION

- **Ten True Things** – Without explanation or preamble, read your Top 10 Achievements list out loud to your group. Let them say WOW!!
- **Respond with Acknowledgments** – Simply state what you see, hear, sense, in a way that builds others up.
  - “I see your \_\_\_\_\_ willingness, courage, creativity . . .”
  - “I hear your \_\_\_\_\_ conviction, strength, passion . . .”
  - “You are \_\_\_\_\_ dedicated, strategic, collaborative . . .”

What’s important about hearing these words from others? It reflects back the best in us. It acknowledges strengths we might forget, downplay, or undervalue in ourselves. Distinct from praise or gratitude, acknowledgment allows you to see and appreciate someone's character, recognizing them for who they are, not just what they do.

# CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Consider the cost of continuing to play small.
- What becomes possible when you communicate confidence?
- Embrace paradox:
  - I am strong AND I am vulnerable.
  - I am capable AND I am still growing.
- When your confidence connects with open-hearted, open-minded vulnerability, it presents as authentic strength.
- Claim the TRUTH: honor the capability and creativity that shine in you.

# RESOURCES

- **Barb Visser Coaching (barbvisser@outlook.com).** <https://www.facebook.com/barbvissercoaching/>
- **The Confidence Gap.** <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>
- **What keeps many women from feeling confident in the workplace?** <https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2018/07/17/what-keeps-many-women-from-feeling-confident-in-the-workplace/>
- **Is confidence a skill you can learn?** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201906/is-confidence-skill-you-can-learn>
- **Want to be more confident? 5 leadership habits to start right now.** <https://www.inc.com/mareo-mccracken/want-to-be-more-confident-5-leadership-habits-to-start-right-now.html>
- **No confidence? No problem. Use these 7 strategies instead.** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201807/no-confidence-no-problem-use-these-7-strategies-instead>
- **The 7 thought habits of highly self-confident people.** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201805/the-7-thought-habits-highly-self-confident-people>
- **How to be more self-confident in just 3 minutes a day.** <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201805/how-be-more-self-confident-in-just-3-minutes-day>
- **The Imposter Syndrome Banishing Spell** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DEOvAu0knsU>
- **Mindtools.** <https://www.mindtools.com/selfconf.html>